

FRENCH INDO-CHINA

The age-old, piecemeal patriotism of the masses still stops at the portals of their commune. A really national patriotism can only rise from the ashes of communal society and the communal gods.

The Scholar party of old irreconcilables continues to exist but not to flourish. The nationalists are the young men whose political adherence is Western in concept, shading all the way from constitutional monarchy to complete autonomy. But they are all working on the foundation of the old secret societies dear to the Oriental heart which existed under the Chinese and Annamite emperors and which continue to offer organized resistance to whatever government is in power. They are made up of magical, religious, and profane elements, attracting the credulous by their mysterious glamour, and affording those of independent and rebellious calibre the only outlet in a society of otherwise crushing rigidity and formalism. Circumstances either bring out their potentialities or force them into the background, but from time immemorial these secret organizations have been the mechanism by which all Annamite social and political movements have become effective. The Annamites were the cultural offspring of China in their contempt for foreigners. They lumped in an aggressive disdain cultured Khmers, amiable Laotians, and primitive Mois. For the Chinese "uncle" they feel an admiration mingled with hatred for past injuries and present competition. Towards the Hindu they feel the arrogance of the Aryan for coloured peoples. The masses are little affected by such considerations since they know nothing of the world beyond the village community, but the hardness of their lives makes them susceptible to any propaganda by which they have nothing to lose and

everything to gain. Vinh, the greatest famine province, is ever the first to revolt. The contrast with the easy life of Europeans in the colony, and the birth of a new class consciousness among natives adds to the ferment of discontent. The old enemies—flood, famine, and the extortions of officials and usurers—have intensified these grievances by the higher cost of living.

The native intelligentsia have special complaints which supplement the more universal economic discontent: their ambitions have been frustrated. Their flirtations with higher education have been checked both in the colony and in France. The desire to learn of the West, as evidenced by the birth of native opinion, did not spring from disinterested motives. It was partly forced on them, coming from the Japanese-inspired ambition to beat the West: at its own game, or to secure a position which would bring security and prestige for life. To be sure,